

EXPERIMENT IN CAMPING

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Experiment in Camping

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BOYS WILL BE BOYS, girls will be girls—even when the boys and girls are blind. For emphasis, we could substitute “particularly when the boys and girls are blind.” Co-educational activity for handicapped persons is a controversial subject. You can find professional workers with seemingly sound arguments both pro and con. And for lay people with their strong personal feelings, it is usually better to leave the subject alone! Like many controversies, there are no absolute rights or wrongs; there are too many variables inside and outside of people. Most of us do accept the fact that human beings are biological and psychological engines, that acceptable behavior can be developed more wholesomely in an attitude of frankness, openness and planned activity. Visually handicapped boys and girls are *just* boys and girls, their problems of relationship intensified by a handicap which limits mobility, and the range and variety of experience.

Several years ago an executive in one of the country's largest agencies serving blind persons proposed that one of its summer camps be operated on a co-educational basis for young men and young women. Dire consequences were predicted by authoritative, well-informed, well-intentioned workers in the field. However, the project was finally approved on an experimental basis, with emphasis on providing superior leadership. So much discussion has developed about the project, it was felt there would be general interest, not only regarding co-educational camping, but also regarding the actual program through which the positive and the wholesome predominated and the best interests of young people were served.

Monday, July 1, 1946. Considerable preparation has gone into having camp ready. It is important to set a tone of ease, efficiency and planning. The first group of campers (16 young ladies and 14 young men) has just arrived at Camp Lighthouse, located in the thick pine woods that fringe the coast. Campers and counselors who did not know each other through agency recreation activities, have become acquainted on the four-hour bus trip. Luggage is quickly assembled, and the campers are comfortably chatting and enjoy-

ing light refreshments in the recreation hall. There is a brief, friendly welcome by the director, then cabin assignments. Within an hour some of the campers are settled in their bunks. Others are already exploring the camp grounds.

By the next day when reveille goes (after earnest debate by the campers, at 8 A.M.) the group is already settled.

Morning

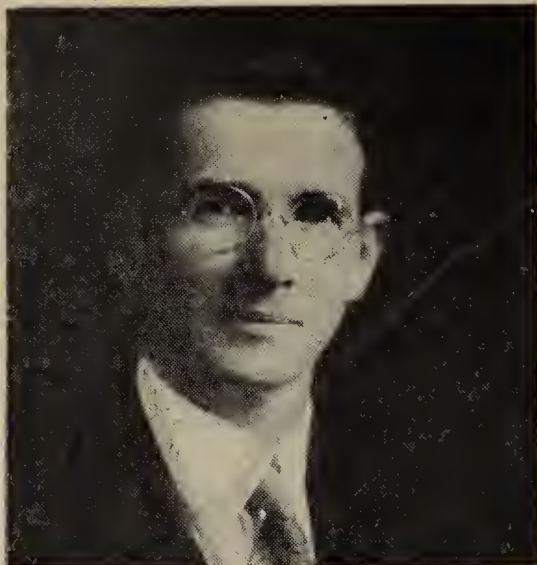
It's a nice summer morning. The air is clear and dry. The sun is already warm but a soft, cool breeze blows in from the bay. The woods behind the cottages are alive with the sounds of birds and insects. Ambitious campers return from a pre-breakfast walk to the beach. Their voices ripple back on the bay wind. Most of us are washing. A few linger in bed until the last moment, the breakfast bell at 8:30. Then we step on it and screen doors slam as we go back to our cabins for bunk cleanup. This is the only required chore at camp. Campers make their own beds and tidy their cabins. Counselors assist only where necessary.

Emphasis is on campers doing for themselves, and only a few continue to need some assistance in their cabin or in getting about the camp grounds. Occasionally some one might lose his bearings. Like the day two men got on a wrong path and wound up on the girl's side of camp. They were quickly made aware of their error by the ladies and beat a hasty retreat.

There are 10 cabins—five arranged in a semi-circle 300 feet to the north for the women. Adjoining each group of cabins are the lavatories and the showers. In the area between the cabin groups are the mess hall, recreation hall, and playfield. Off to one side is a two-car garage, and next to it, a sixty-foot high water tower which stands like a huge sentinel guarding the camp. All locations are connected to each other by straight pebbled paths. You can feel at once, through the soles of your shoes, when you get off the path.

Ten o'clock—time for activities to begin. No one has to follow any formal program. Campers are urged to take part in activities new to them.

Plans and Surveys



GEORGE D. BUTLER
Research



ALAN B. BURRITT
Recreation Areas and Facilities

THE NATIONAL RECREATION ASSOCIATION is "at your service" if you are thinking of recreation surveys and long range plans for your community.

Community leaders have come more and more in recent months to feel that if public recreation is to be run on the most efficient lines it must be based on functional planning—the kind of planning that relates structures and areas and facilities to the functions and services to be provided by them; and that, further, relates those functions and services to the needs, the desires, the resources of the people of the community. Such planning requires specialized knowledge and experience, rooted in understanding of the whole purpose of recreation and the ways that this purpose may be realized in land and in building materials, in human beings and the institutions they have created for themselves.

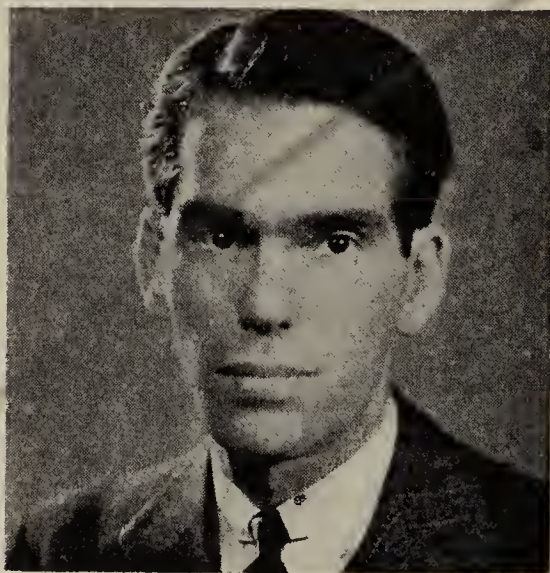
To the end that this kind of intelligent farseeingness may be accomplished, the Association has on its staff a group of men trained to come into a community and to "size it up" recreationally. They are prepared to analyze conditions in a city—the location, type and character of existing recreation areas and facilities; the social conditions, population and traffic patterns, housing problems, and other varied factors of urban living as these are related to recreation. On the basis of this analysis the surveyors are prepared to make recommendations for future acquisitions and development of land and facilities in accordance

with accepted standards and local needs, to suggest a sound administrative structure for a public recreation setup, to point out possible ways of

financing the whole long term program. They are prepared, too, to give advice about the kind of activities program that may be carried on with the facilities at hand and to indicate ways in which this program may be enriched over the years.

Long range plans and surveys are the special province of four members of the Association's staff—George D. Butler, recreation research; Alan B. Burritt, recreation areas and facilities; Donald L. Kline, recreation buildings and areas; Clifton Hutchins, recreation surveys. Behind these men is the whole Association staff (including those field representatives who have direct knowledge of recreation situations in local communities) ready at all times for consultation and advice on special problems. So, it may be said with truth, that each long range plan or recreation survey is backed with all the Association's accumulated experience of forty years of serving through recreation.

Requests for plans and surveys are filled in the order in which they are received in the office. The charge for the service is only so large as is necessary to cover the actual cost of giving it. For further information on long range plans and surveys, as well as on the design of individual areas write to the National Recreation Association.



H. CLIFTON HUTCHINS
Recreation Surveys



DONALD L. KLINE
Recreation Buildings

All activities are led by counselors, and the quality of leadership makes the counselors one with the campers. We are all adults.

Camp Lighthouse is a pretty sight as the ten o'clock whistle blows. There is a general exodus from the cabins and the guide paths become alive with the moving colors of bathing suits, robes, slacks, towels, and sweaters. At the entrance to the boardwalk which leads to the bay, the head swimming counselor turns up his large red and white signal flag to signify that the beach is open. That's where most of us are headed—for swimming, fishing, crabbing or boating.

On the playfield counselors organize a baseball game. We use a soccer ball. Play is not expert but the fun is all there. Some of the batters can really hit that ball. To one side six campers are bowling. A counselor sets the pin, calls direction, and indicates the pin's standing after the first ball is thrown. Four campers are pitching horseshoes, direction being indicated by tapping the stake. A small group of men and women have formed a circle and a large medicine ball is passed around; at first slowly, then faster and faster. Now two balls, then three are going around. All the swings are in motion. Near the garage, some campers are shooting a basketball at a hoop with a sound buzzer. Further away, archers are aiming at a large target fitted with a sound device.

Nine campers assemble in front of the recreation hall. They seem unusually well clothed for this warm day. They are blueberry hikers. Tomorrow they will get two envied portions of blueberry pie for dessert.

A few more resolute campers, all of them women, are in the recreation hall where the dance counselor conducts her daily exercise class. Here you stretch muscles you never knew were part of you.

So, soon after 10 A.M., every camper is busy and active. At 11:30 we all wind up at the beach, 400 yards due east of camp and reached by a four-foot wide, railed boardwalk that takes you straight as an arrow across the salt water marshes which border the camp on the bay side. The sun is strong on your face as you go out. It warms your neck and shoulders as you come in.

Half-way to the beach, the boardwalk widens to a width of 10 feet right over a little lake. This is the lagoon, domain of the sun bathers. For some unknown reason (we never bothered to inquire!) the lagoon was singularly free from insect pests.

There is real fun on the beach. Barnegat Bay water is warm, no chill even when you first plunge in. About 30 feet offshore, the bottom is firm with

smooth, hard-packed sand, and only four feet deep. For the next 300 feet the water depth increases perceptibly to five feet, making a large safe swimming area. Mornings the bay is calm, ideal for learning to swim and row. Afternoons, a brisk wind ruffles the water with white-capped rollers—wonderful for bouncing around in the water or in a boat.

It is grand fun to ride the waves, to sit in the prow of a boat, feet dangling in the water. The waves smack into the boat making it go up and down; the cold spray makes you shiver, then you feel the sun. The warm wind dries you in a minute.

In a corner of the roped-in swimming area, a camper ducks herself continually. She looks queer, but we know she is the clamming champion of the camp. She digs in the sand with her toes feeling for the hard shells. Under she goes, up she comes—with another clam. She can fill a pail in an hour. Her clams make many of our stews and chowders. Personally, she prefers her clams raw. Standing there in the water, she cracks one shell against another, swishes the open one through the salt water, then—one gulp. Delicious!

Some campers want to fish all the time. Blowfish are the usual catch. They make good eating, particularly to the fishermen that catch them.

It's almost twelve o'clock and we must start back for a personal cleanup before lunch, the most important event of the day!

Afternoon

After lunch comes the hour of quiet and relaxation, perhaps for letter writing or reading.

This is a good time to mention sick call. Our one-room clinic is manned by three first aiders, the camp director, a male counselor, and a female counselor. There are quite a few patients. Cuts, bruises, splinters, sunburns, headaches are the daily casualties. The campers wince and grimace but take their medicine gaily, in keeping with basic camp spirit.

Camp Lighthouse is quiet now, some campers have fallen asleep. You can hear them. Snoring is a problem but a little research reveals that snorers usually do not bother one another, and there are some who can sleep under any circumstances. Cabin changes are easily arranged.

Suddenly the three o'clock activities whistle blows. The lifeguard raises the beach flag. The camp awakens slowly, there is movement, the paths again become colorful.

Special afternoon activities are added to those of the morning program. A group is going on a mail

hike to the local post office, a two-mile leisurely walk with a refreshing stopover at the local inn. A few ambitious campers are on their way to Barnegat, five miles away, for shopping and refreshments. Another group is off for more berry picking, vowing to come back with more than five quarts—the camp record.

Evening

Supper is at 6:30, and again a happy crowd is in the mess hall. You just couldn't be moody or grouchy in the mess hall, proof positive that "grub" is the most important item in camp. We linger over another cup of coffee and cigarettes.

Most of us smoke. We have to be careful about smoking because thick dry woods surround the camp. We prefer precaution to prohibition. Every smoker is taught to break a match in half before throwing it away, and to "G.I." a lighted cigarette by breaking open the paper packet, scattering the tobacco. The finding of even one cigarette butt is reason enough for serious reprimand to the campers. We are all exceedingly conscientious about this privilege of smoking.

After supper there is a brief free period. We

go to our cabins for a bit of tidying before the evening program. Some go for a short walk, a few pitch horseshoes. (But the mosquitoes are pretty bad at twilight.) Leisurely we congregate in the recreation hall.

The formal evening program has not yet begun. In one corner campers are grouped around the record player. Three fellows and two girls are playing cards. A bunco game is in progress. The women outnumber the men six to one. Four men are playing dominoes. At the other end of the 50-foot room a camper accompanies a quartet on the piano. On the other side, eight campers are bowling on the indoor two-way bowling alley. On the screened porch, campers are seated around a counselor who is reading the daily paper to them. The canteen, run by one of the campers, is doing a brisk business in candy, cigarettes, soft drinks, post cards and stamps.

Finally everyone is accounted for, and the evening program begins. Tonight is to be a quiet program.

Eleven thirty and time to turn in. How quickly silence spreads over the camp. It's a happy, peaceful quiet. A bugle blows taps. Day is done.

Great Gift in a Small Package

THE TOWN of Washington, Connecticut, has a population of only 2,089,* but its size hasn't kept it from going ahead in a big recreation way. Here's the story—and a fine example it is of a town that believes in following the often neglected advice about hanging together.

The initiative came from the Lions Club. Late in the fall of 1945 that group met far into the night discussing the community's need for recreation. Washington's high school principal, having in 1944 conducted a summer recreation program in a nearby town, saw the possibility of combining community recreation and a physical education program for the high school and elementary school and thus killing two birds with a single recreation worker. He put his vision in the form of a motion. The Lions Club were "all in favor" and backed up their enthusiastic ayes with a contribution of \$1,000 in cold cash. Their money was to be used for the recreation share of a leader's salary with the understanding that the school board would find additional funds to carry the salary for the school part of the program.

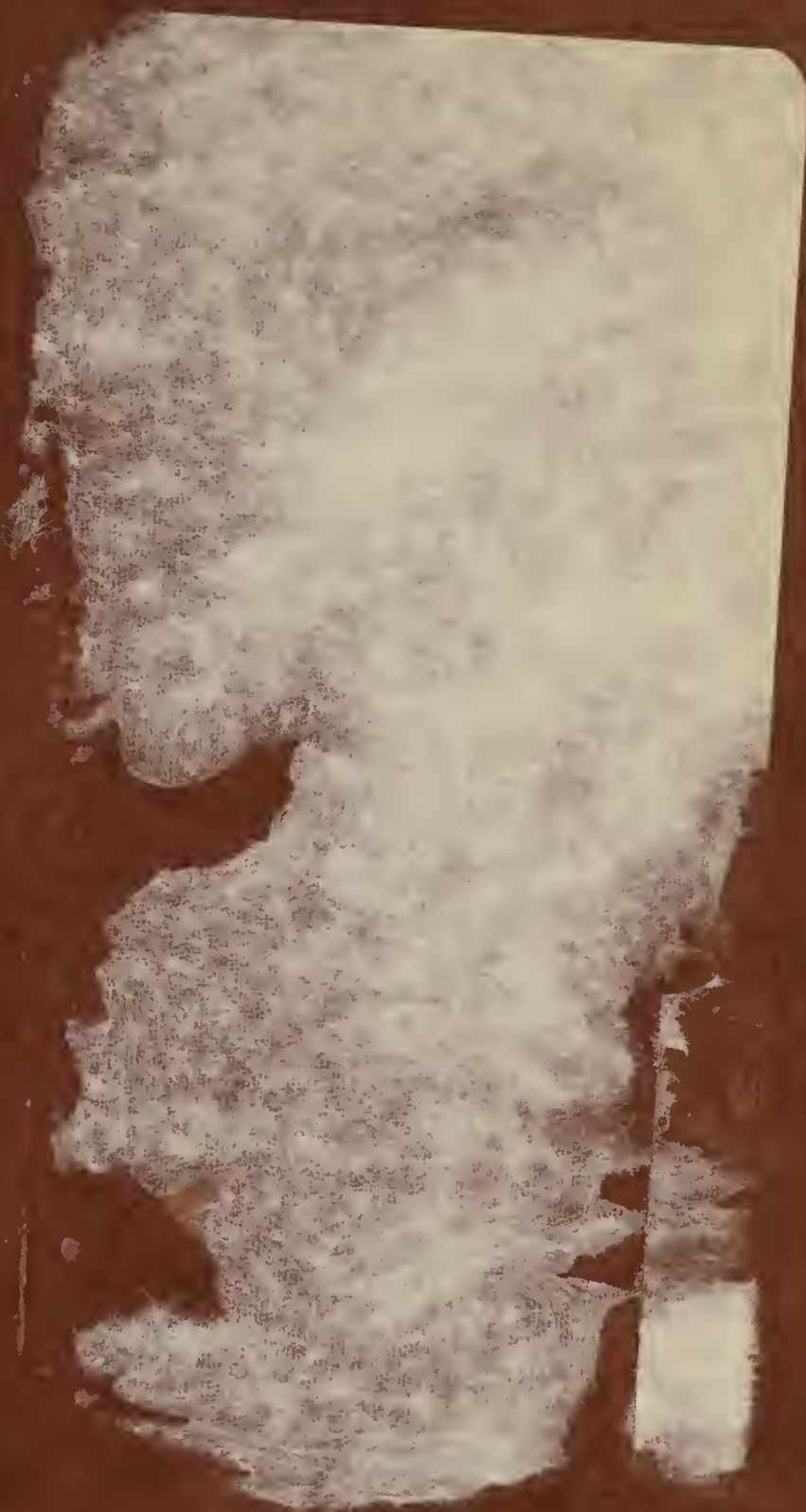
This was the beginning. It was followed up by a lively campaign of telling the story to the rest of the town, finding the proper leader, and delivering the promised goods in the summer and fall of 1946.

The plan was for the leader to put his main emphasis on the community program during the summer months (from the middle of June through August) and in midwinter (December through March). In the fall and spring he was to devote most of his time to school football and baseball.

Following the lead of the Lions Club, other community organizations contributed sums to be used for purchasing equipment. The town's board of finance helped finance the swimming program.

So, with many groups cooperating, Washington accomplished its first year's recreation program. The seed was well sown and the play crop flourished mightily—so mightily, indeed, that beginning on July 1, 1947, the town will assume financial responsibility for the program as a whole leaving the Lions Club free to help with incidentals as they—and the community—see the need.

*1940 census figures.



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